

Book reviews

Belfast: 100 years of Public Health. By R Blaney. (pp 84, illus. £2.95). Belfast City Council and the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, 1988.

Dr Blaney's book "100 years of Public Health in Belfast" coincides with the centenary of this great city. In fact the book concentrates on the first 30 years or so of Belfast's city status. This may be because the successors to the Victorian public health reformers were ineffective; or it may simply reflect the fact that they were left with little upon which to improve, though I doubt this; or perhaps it is because the records of those in the twentieth century are less complete and accessible than those of their predecessors. Whatever the explanation, the description we have is well worth reading. At £2.95, with many handsome illustrations, it is good value for anyone interested in public health or medicine in Belfast. My only significant complaint is the production in "coffee table format", which makes it impossible to place in any conventional bookcase. While facilitating the use of large illustrations, such a format will ensure that most copies of this useful book will not survive the next hundred years.

PMB

Clinical endocrinology and diabetes. Edited by MC Sheppard and JA Franklyn. (pp 191, illus. £22.50). Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1988.

There are now a great number of small paperback books in the different specialties which are geared directly to the sub-specialties of present day medical practice. It is clear that there is a market for such small disease-orientated booklets just as it is equally clear that a comprehensive treatise of all aspects of internal medicine is too big to handle, to say nothing of expense.

This undergraduate and postgraduate summary of present day endocrinology has the great advantage of being produced by colleagues from the same medical school who knew each others work and who are consistent in their approach. The clinical work and research activities of the group of endocrinologists who have trained and practiced in Birmingham in the past 10 years is widely respected and this book does credit to them all. There is a reasonable degree of unanimity amongst the endocrinologists in the United Kingdom in terms of what we would consider standard investigative procedures and this book certainly acts as a reasonable and convenient reference source. The section on diabetes is intentionally brief and would have to be supplemented by a separate monograph for full information.

I suppose £22.50 is a reasonable price by present day standards. There is a case for having a copy of a brief clinical book of this type available for all clinical students attached to a ward during their clinical clerkship. This is the sort of stimulating introduction to a topic which might well be the stimulus for the next generation of clinical endocrinologists.

DRH

Paediatric respiratory diseases: 4th meeting of the European Paediatric Respiratory Society, Cracow. Editors: J Rudnik and R Kurzaura. Rabka: National Research Institute of Mother and Child, 1985: pp 387.

This book is a compilation of papers presented at the 4th meeting of the European Paediatric Respiratory Society held in Cracow in 1983. The papers are arranged into five parts: (I) epidemiology of paediatric respiratory disease, (II) diagnosis of paediatric respiratory diseases, (III) asthma in children, (IV) bronchitis and non-specific respiratory disease in children, (V) miscellaneous, dealing mostly with therapy and social aspects of paediatric respiratory disease.

Understandably, as the authors of the various papers come from different countries, there is a great variation in terminology in the papers. This does not lead to easy reading. This book would be of interest mainly to paediatricians concerned with respiratory disease, particularly those involved in definitive research projects. As it is not totally comprehensive of respiratory disease, it is not suitable for those studying for higher paediatric examinations. The papers on standardization of lung function tests in infancy by Helm presents an excellent review of respiratory function in the young child.

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